

19. The Divorce of Israel.

Now, keeping in mind what we said above in regard to the passage from Isaiah about the bill of divorcement, we will say that the mother of the people separated herself from Christ, her husband, without having received the bill of divorcement, but afterwards when there was found in her an unseemly thing, and she did not find favour in his sight, the bill of divorcement was written out for her; for when the new covenant called those of the Gentiles to the house of Him who had cast away his former wife, it virtually gave the bill of divorcement to her who formerly separated from her husband—the law, and the Word. Therefore he, also, having separated from her, married, so to speak, another, having given into the hands of the former the bill of divorcement; wherefore they can no longer do the things enjoined on them by the law, because of the bill of divorcement. And a sign that she has received the bill of divorcement is this, that Jerusalem was destroyed along with what they called the sanctuary of the things in it which were believed to be holy, and with the altar of burnt offerings, and all the worship associated with it. And a further sign of the bill of divorcement is this, that they cannot keep their feasts, even though according to the letter of the law designedly commanded them, in the place which the Lord God appointed to them for keeping feasts; but there is this also, that the whole synagogue has become unable to stone those who have committed this or that sin; and thousands of things commanded are a sign of the bill of divorcement; and the fact that “there is no more a prophet,” and that they say,

508

“We no longer see signs;”⁶¹⁹⁰ for the Lord says, “He hath taken away from Judæa and from Jerusalem,” according to the word of Isaiah, “Him that is mighty, and her that is mighty, a powerful giant,” etc., down to the words, “a prudent hearer.”⁶¹⁹¹ Now, He who is the Christ may have taken the synagogue to wife and cohabited with her, but it may be that afterwards she found not favour in His sight; and the reason of her not having found favour in His sight was, that there was found in her an unseemly thing; for what was more unseemly than the circumstance that, when it was proposed to them to release one at the feast, they asked for the release of Barabbas the robber, and the condemnation of Jesus?⁶¹⁹² And what was more unseemly than the fact, that they all said in His case, “Crucify Him, crucify Him,” and “Away with such a fellow from the earth”?⁶¹⁹³ And can this be freed from the charge of unseemliness, “His blood be upon us, and upon our children”?⁶¹⁹⁴ Wherefore, when He was avenged, Jerusalem was compassed with armies, and its desolation was near,⁶¹⁹⁵ and their house was taken away from it, and “the daughter of Zion was left as a booth in a vineyard, and as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, and as a besieged city.”⁶¹⁹⁶ And, about the same time, I think, the husband wrote out a bill of divorcement to his former wife, and gave it into her hands, and sent her away from his own house, and the bond of her who came from the Gentiles has been cancelled about which the Apostle says, “Having blotted out the bond written in ordinances, which was contrary to us, and He hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross;”⁶¹⁹⁷ for Paul also and others became proselytes of Israel for her who came from the Gentiles.⁶¹⁹⁸ The first wife, accordingly, not having found favour before her husband, because in her

had been found an unseemly thing, went out from the dwelling of her husband, and, going away, has become joined to another man, to whom she has subjected herself, whether we should call the husband Barabbas the robber, who is figuratively the devil, or some evil power. And in the case of some of that synagogue there has happened the former thing which was written in the law, but in the case of others, that which was second. For the last husband⁶¹⁹⁹ hated his wife and will write out for her some day at the consummation of things a bill of divorcement, when God so orders it, and will give it into her hands and will send her away from his dwelling; for as the good God will put enmity between the serpent and the woman, and between his seed and her seed,⁶²⁰⁰ so will He order it that the last husband shall hate her.

⁶¹⁹⁰ Ps. lxxiv. 9.

⁶¹⁹¹ Isa. iii. 1–3.

⁶¹⁹² Matt. xxvii. 21.

⁶¹⁹³ John xix. 15.

⁶¹⁹⁴ Matt. xxvii. 25.

⁶¹⁹⁵ Luke xxi. 20.

⁶¹⁹⁶ Isa. i. 8.

⁶¹⁹⁷ Col. ii. 14.

⁶¹⁹⁸ The text is corrupt.

6199 Deut. xxiv. 3.

6200 Gen. iii. 15.